

England. Churches, etc. — Baptists — Kent and
Sussex Assoc. of Particular Baptist Churches
CIRCULAR LETTER,

FROM THE
ELDERS, MINISTERS, and MESSENGERS
OF THE
BAPTIST CHURCHES

Assembled at SANDHURST, in KENT, the 1st and 2d Days of JUNE, 1784: Maintaining the important Doctrines of three equal Persons in one divine Essence—Eternal and personal Election to Holiness here, and eternal Life hereafter—The original Guilt and Depravity of Mankind—Particular Redemption—Free Justification by the imputed Righteousness of CHRIST alone—Efficacious Grace in Regeneration—The Perseverance of the Saints to Glory. Professing likewise Water Baptism, upon a personal Confession of Faith in CHRIST and Repentance towards GOD, according to the primitive Mode and Discipline of the Christian Church:

To the several Churches of CHRIST whom they represent, or have received Letters from, meeting at ASHFORD, SANDHURST, SMARDEN, and TENTERDEN, in KENT; BATTLE, ROTHERFIELD, RYE, and WEAVELSFIELD, in SUSSEX.

DEARLY BELOVED BRETHREN IN THE LORD,

GRACE be to you, and Peace from God our Father, and from the Lord Jesus Christ. Blessed be God, even the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of Mercies, and the God of all Comfort, who comforteth us in all our Tribulation, that we may be able to comfort them which are in any Trouble, by the Comfort wherewith we ourselves are comforted of God! (1.)

We know nothing better than to stir up your pure Minds to observe the Advice of our Apostle Paul, the great Apostle of the Gentiles, when he said, ONLY LET YOUR CONVERSATION BE AS IT BECOMETH THE GOSPEL OF CHRIST: THAT WHETHER

WE COME AND SEE YOU, OR ELSE BE ABSENT, WE MAY HEAR OF YOUR AFFAIRS, THAT YE STAND FAST IN ONE SPIRIT, WITH ONE MIND, STRIVING TOGETHER FOR THE FAITH OF THE GOSPEL. (2.) We will first shew you what the Gospel is, and the Benefit we receive thereby; because Love to the Gospel, and to its Author, is the true Motive to all Obedience rightly performed. But perhaps some may say, surely we are not so ignorant as not to know what the Gospel is; indeed the Gospel is a common Word in the Mouth of most People, but we are fully persuaded it is but few who know it in Distinction from that which is not Gospel; and the Apostle affirms, that *if our Gospel be hid, it is hid from them that are lost, in whom the God of this World hath blinded the Minds of them who believe not, lest the Light of the glorious Gospel of Christ, who is the Image of God, should shine unto them* (3.). The God of this World very well knows that if he can keep poor Souls blind to the Gospel, they are in his Net, but if the Lord the Spirit causes the Light of the Gospel to shine unto them, the Snare is broken, and the Captives are delivered; and therefore Satan's Ministers are made by him very crafty in blending the Law and the Gospel together: Yea, they lie in wait to deceive poor Souls by transforming themselves into Ministers of Christ (4.). O that the Lord would make his Ministers wise to distinguish between Law and Gospel! Some say, the Gospel is the four first Books of the New Testament, *Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John*. 'Tis true the Gospel is in them, but why should they be called the Gospel more than the Epistles, for the Gospel is in them also? There are some Parts of the four first Books, and of the Epistles too, that are not the Gospel wherein we stand, and by which we are saved; but the Reason why the four first Books of the New Testament are called the Gospel is, because they contain the History of the Birth, Life, Death, Resurrection, Ascension, and Intercession of the only begotten Son of God, which is indeed the Substance of the blessed Gospel; but you know, Brethren, that the Law is not the Gospel: Now then, to divide Law and Gospel in a few Words easy to be understood, you may remark, that whatsoever you can find written in the Word of God that *you* are commanded to *do*, that is not the Gospel by which your Sins are forgiven, and your Persons justified in the Sight of God; but is the Law and Ordinances of God, which all they that believe should carefully observe, and diligently keep out of Love to him who hath loved us, and given himself for us. But whatsoever you find in the Scriptures, relating what *Christ* hath done, is doing, or shall

(2.) Phil. i. 27.

(3.) 2 Cor. iv. 3, 4.

(4.) 2 Cor. xi. 13.

do for the Salvation of poor Sinners, that is the glorious Gospel of Christ by which we are saved. Now, Brethren, you know that all Men are Sinners in the first Man, as it is written, *by one Man's Disobedience many were made Sinners, so Death passed upon all Men, for in him all have sinned* (5.). Beloved, you see that the Sin of one Man hath brought Sin, Death, Judgement, and Condemnation upon all Men, and not only so, but Sin hath brought blindness of Eyes, deafness of Ears, and hardness of Heart, yea a carnal Mind that is Enmity to God, is not subject to the Law of God, neither indeed can be (6.); so then the Thoughts of every carnal Heart are only Evil continually; we have all wilfully rebelled against the Lord our God, we have done those Things which he hath forbidden, and left undone what he hath commanded: Therefore we have no Right to the least Favour God hath to give on Account of any Thing done by us or in us, for we have all sinned and come short of his Glory (7.). Beloved, if the good Lord had not, out of his mere Goodness and loving Kindness, sent his co-equal and co-eternal Son to work out, and bring in an everlasting Righteousness, we must have perished in and for our Sins for ever and ever; but blessed be his Name for that everlasting Covenant, well ordered in all Things, and sure to all the Seed (8.)!

I. You know, Brethren, *we are chosen in Christ before the Foundation of the World*, and given to him; yea, made his Care and Charge; he freely and voluntarily engaged to become our Surety, to make Satisfaction and Reconciliation, when we could make none for ourselves: *Burnt offerings, and Offering for Sin thou wouldest not, neither hadst Pleasure therein, which are offered by the Law; then said he, Lo! I come to do thy Will, O God* (9.). Now this is the first Branch of the glorious Gospel, on this Account it is that we are preserved when in open Rebellion against God, and in his appointed Time, called by the holy Spirit to believe the Gospel, and by beholding therein the Glory of the Lord, are changed into the same Image from Glory to Glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord (1.).

II. According to the eternal Agreement between the Father, Son, and Spirit, *in the fulness of Time God sent forth his Son, made of a Woman, made under the Law*, that he might redeem them that were under the Law (2.); the divine Son of God took our Nature from the Virgin, and was truly Man as well as God. Immanuel, God with us. God manifested in

(5.) Rom. v. 12, 19. (6.) Rom. viii. 7. (7.) Rom. iii. 23.
 (8.) 2 Sam. xxii. 5.—Rom. iv. 16. (9.) Heb. x. 8, 9. (1.) 2 Cor. iii. 18.
 (2.) Gal. iv. 4.

the Flesh; in him dwelt all the Fulness of the Godhead bodily (3.). As Man, he was in a Capacity to suffer and die for our sins, and as God, he was able to save to the utmost all that come to the Father by him; this is another Branch of the Gospel: This encourageth poor Sinners to come to him for Life, being a near Kinsman, for *the Children being Partakers of Flesh and Blood, he also himself took Part of the same* (4.). O how this encourageth us to trust in him! for, being Jehovah our God, none can pluck us out of his Hand!

III. *Our Surety fulfilled the Law for us*; that is to say, he hath kept all the Commands for us perfectly, both inwardly and outwardly, for the Law requireth of us Holiness of Heart, as well as Perfection in Life, and Christ hath given the Law this full Satisfaction, for his Heart was holy, and his Life was perfect; now this Obedience of his which he performed in his own Person, is given and imputed to us for Righteousness: In this Obedience the Lord looks on his People as perfectly holy and righteous, and without this we cannot do any Thing right in the Sight of God, for *he that doeth Righteousness, is righteous, even as he is righteous* (5.). It is in this Obedience alone, without any Works of ours, that our dear Redeemer will, in the last Day, *present his Bride before his Father, without Spot or Wrinkle, or any such Thing: unblameable and unreprouable in his Sight* (6.); and this is another Branch of the Gospel of Christ.

IV. *God hath laid on our Surety the Sins of all his People* (7.); he suffered the Punishment due to his People, in their Name, and in their Nature; their original Sin, their actual Sin, their Heart Sin, yea all their Sins past, present, and to come; so that now there is no Quarrel between God and his People, for *he hath reconciled us to himself by Jesus Christ, and hath committed unto us the Word of Reconciliation* (8.): We are now to inform you, that *he was wounded for our Transgressions—he was bruised for our Iniquities—the Chastisement of our Peace was upon him—and by his Stripes we are healed* (9.): The Word does not say *we shall be healed* if we lead a good Life, as though it depended on our good Works, but *are healed*, that is, pardoned and accepted in the Sight of God; 'tis not *he will*, but *he hath loved us, and given himself for us* (1.); *he hath made an End of Sin,—finished Transgression,—made Reconciliation for Iniquity—and brought in everlasting Righteousness* (2.); so then, Beloved, you may clearly see in the Gospel, Law and Justice fully satisfied for all

(3.) Col. ii. 9. (4.) Heb. ii. 14. (5.) 1 John, iii. 7. ii. 29.
 (6.) Eph. v. 27. Col. i. 27. (7.) Isa. liii. 6. (8.) 2 Cor. v. 18, 19.
 (9.) Isa. liii. 5. (1.) Gal. ii. 20. (2.) Dan. ix. 24. Compare Rom. v. 10.

we have done amiss, or ever shall do amiss. Know for your Comfort, Brethren, that Christ has not only engaged to be our Saviour, become Incarnate, fulfilled the Law, and suffered the Penalty due to us for breaking it, but

V. *He rose again for our Justification.* Friends, when Christ suffered, died, and rose again, he did it not as a single Person, but as the Head and Surety of his People; hence the Apostle says we are crucified with him—dead with him—raised up together with him—ascended and set down in heavenly Places in him. So then, a Part of the Elect is in Heaven already in their Head. *The Children being Partakers of Flesh and Blood, he also himself took Part of the same (3.).*

VI. *Our great Redeemer is now preparing Places in Heaven for us, that we may be with him.* *In my Father's House, says he, are many Mansions; if it were not so, I would have told you: I go to prepare a Place for you, and I will come again, and receive you unto myself, that where I am, there ye may be also, to behold my Glory (4.).* But this is not all, for

VII. *He ever liveth to make Intercession for us, or plead in our Behalf (5.);* but what does he plead? Does he plead any Goodness in us, or any good Thing done by us? No surely. We are entirely unworthy of the least of God's Favours. You know, Brethren, when the High Priest went into the Holiest once a Year, he never went in without Blood, to offer for his own Sin, and for the Sins of the People; but our High Priest having, by one Offering of himself, for ever perfected them who are sanctified, and is now entered by his own Blood into the Holiest of all, into Heaven itself, there to appear in the Presence of God for us. Now with what should he make Intercession, but that with which he entered in, that is, his own Blood? Christ's Intercession appears to be somewhat like this:—When a Sinner is convinced, by the Lord, the Spirit, of his undone Condition, by original and actual Sin, and is made sensible that none but Christ can save him, and is enabled to cry, Lord, save, for Christ's Sake; this Man will plead Christ alone without any Works of his, for Christ is able to save to the utmost all them that come to God by him, seeing he ever liveth to make Intercession for them, as much as, if Christ should say: “Fa-
“ther, here is a poor Sinner begging Forgiveness for my Sake,
“I have suffered for his Sins, poured out my own Blood for his
“Reconciliation, wrought out, and brought in an everlasting

(3.) Heb. ii. 14.

(4.) John xiv. 2, 3, xvii. 24.

(5.) Heb. vii. 25.

“ Righteousness

“ Righteousness for him ; Father, forgive him, for my Sake.” The Answer is, “ My Son hath magnified the Law, and made it honourable in his Righteousness, I am well pleased that the Sinner should be accepted in Christ, though his Sins have been ever so numerous, and, as a Token of my Love, I will give him the Knowledge of Salvation by the forgiveness of Sins.” Thus Christ intercedes for all the Favours his Bride wants in Time or Eternity ; hence the Apostle writes to the Children of God, not to sin, but if any of them do sin, for their Encouragement not to despair of God’s Mercy in Christ, he says, *we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ, the Righteous* (6.) : Yea, he gives them eternal Life, and they shall never perish, neither shall any pluck them out of his Hand, for they are kept by the Power of God, through Faith unto Salvation.

VIII. *He will come again the second Time without Sin unto Salvation, and raise their dead Bodies out of their Graves according to his Word* : Marvel not at this, for the Hour is coming, in the which all that are in the Graves shall hear his Voice, and shall come forth ; then will he say to his own People, Come ye blessed of my Father, inherit the Kingdom prepared for you before the Foundation of the World : He will set them on the right Hand of God, from whence flow Pleasures for evermore (7.).

These Things, we apprehend, are the Sum and Substance of the glorious Gospel of Christ, who is the Image of God. But some may say, how shall I know whether I am of that blessed Number that shall inherit the Kingdom of God ? We answer, if the holy Spirit, the third Person in the Godhead, hath convinced thee of thy lost State by original and actual Sin, and thy utter Inability to do any Thing toward thy Salvation, and made thee willing to part with thy own Doings in point of Acceptance with God, and hath given thee Faith to close in heartily with the Gospel, to receive the Truth in the Love of it, and to say, O that I may be found in him, not having on my own Righteousness which is of the Law, but that which is by Christ, the Righteousness which is of God by Faith (8.) ! If this is thy happy State, all is thine, thou art passed from Death unto Life, and shalt never come into Condemnation ; whether thou hast been a moral, upright Man, or a prophane, filthy Creature, there is no Difference, for *all* have sinned and come short of the Glory of God ; but we are justified freely by his Grace

(6.) 1 John, ii. 1. (7.) John, v. 28. Matt, xxv. 34. Ps. xvi. 11.
(8.) John, xvi. 8, 9. iii. 18. Phil, iii. 9.

through the Redemption that is in Christ Jesus. The Lord has given a free Invitation in the Gospel to all heavy laden Sinners, saying, *Ho! every one that thirsteth, come ye to the Waters, and he that hath no Money; come ye, buy and eat, yea come, buy Wine and Milk without Money, and without Price—Come unto me all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you Rest—All that the Father giveth me shall come unto me; and him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out—All Manner of Sins shall be forgiven and he that believes shall be saved; yet Faith is not a Condition but an Evidence of Things not seen; Faith is the Gift of God (9.).* Now, Brethren, you have nothing to do toward your Justification in the Sight of God, nor toward the Pardon of your Sins, only let your Conversation be as becometh the Gospel of Christ, that whether we come and see you, or else be absent, we may hear of your Affairs; that ye stand fast in one Spirit, with one Mind, striving together for the Faith of the Gospel. Dear Brethren, nothing becomes the Gospel more than for us to be in one Spirit, to love one another as Brethren, and to live in Love; to be of one Mind, to promote the Interest of the Gospel, and of one another, from a Spirit of Love to him who hath loved us, and given himself for us, and not only contend, but earnestly strive together for the Faith once delivered to the Saints. It becomes the Gospel that we in nothing be terrified by our Adversaries when they persecute us, despitefully use us, and speak all Manner of Evil against us falsely for Christ's Sake, for this is to them an evident Token of Perdition, but to us of Salvation, and that of God, therefore let us rejoice, and be exceeding glad, for great is our Reward in Heaven, for it is given unto us, on the Behalf of Christ, that we should not only believe on him, but also suffer for his Sake (1.). It becomes the Gospel, for the People that believe it, to be very careful to maintain good Works out of Love to God; they should be found in all the Ordinances of his House, and abstain from fleshly Pleasures which war against the Soul, they should be sober, and do all Things that are right in the Sight of God; peradventure you will say, how shall we learn this Lesson? The Grace of God which bringeth Salvation hath appeared to all Men, TEACHING us, that denying Ungodliness, and worldly Lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly in this present World (2.). Beloved, would you live more holy and happy? It must be by Faith in the Son of God, for this is the Victory that overcometh the World, even our Faith (3.). Would you have more of the Image and Spirit of Christ in your Souls? O then behold the Glory of the Lord Jesus, in the Glass of the Gospel: Behold him in his Godhead and Manhood, able to save to the utmost

(9.) Isa. lv. 1. Matt. xi. 28. John. vi. 37. Eph. ii. 8. (1.) Phil. i. 11.
 8, 29. Matt. v. 11, 12. (2.) Tit. ii. 11, 12. (3.) 1 John, v. 4.
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from the greatest Sins whatsoever, except the Sin against the holy Ghost, and if thou hast a Desire to be saved by him, thou hast not committed that Sin, for such are hardened, and to renew them again to Repentance is impossible! Behold him perfectly fulfilling the righteous Law of God for thee, that thou mightest have a Wedding Garment to stand before God in, without Spot or Wrinkle, or any such Thing! Behold him in his Manhood supported by his Godhead, bearing thy Sins, and the Wrath of God due to thee for them! See how he was crowned with Thorns, spitted on, nailed to the Cross, pierced with a Spear, pouring out his own Heart's Blood, yea his Soul was made an Offering for thy Sins, by which thou art for ever delivered from the Wrath of God! Behold him rising from the Dead for thee! Blessed are they that have Part in the first Resurrection! On them the second Death hath no Power! behold his glorious Ascension, and blessed Intercession now at the right Hand of God! By thus beholding the Lord, you may triumph, and say, *O Death! where is thy Sting? O Grave! where is thy Victory? The Sting of Death is Sin, and the Strength of Sin is the Law; but Thanks be to God who giveth us the Victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.* Beloved, the more the Spirit enables you to behold the Glory of the Lord in this Glass, the more you will love him, and be like him, for *we, with open Face beholding as in a Glass the Glory of the Lord, are changed into the same Image, from Glory to Glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord.* The People of God do not neglect their Duties so sadly as they do, because they do not know them, but because they see them in the Spirit and Glass of the Law, therefore they cannot love them; but when they see them in the Spirit of the Gospel, they delight in them after the inner Man. Duties are to be taught, that the People may receive the Law from the Hand of the Priest, *for we are not without Law to God, but are under the Law to Christ,* but no Work done from the Spirit of Bondage is regarded of God, yet he will never forget the Work of Faith, and the Labour of Love. Faith purifies the Heart, and works by Love, and the Life of a Christian is a Life of Faith on the Son of God. O our Brethren, may the Lord make us strong in Faith, giving Glory to his Name! Pray for us, the Ministers of the Gospel, that we may be delivered from a Spirit of Bondage, for, till then, we are persuaded, we may preach Duties till our Tongues cleave to the Roof of our Mouth, and your Souls will be still distressed, and no Works will be done to the Glory of God. O Lord! make us what thou wouldst have us to be, and teach us what thou wouldst have us to know, for the Redeemer's Sake alone. Amen.

Signed in Behalf of the Assembly, by
WILLIAM VIDLER, MODERATOR.

B R E V I A T E S.

THE associated Ministers and Messengers met on *Tuesday the 1st of June, 1784, at Three o'Clock in the Afternoon.* Brother *Stace* began in Prayer—and was followed by Brother *Mott* and Brother *Scott*—Brother *Vidler* was chosen Moderator—The Preliminaries of the Association were read—As were also the Letters from the several Churches. We were happy to observe that the Work of God is reviving in some of them; and that they were all favoured with the Means of Grace, except the Church at *Smarden*, from whom a Letter was presented, craving Advice and Assistance.—A Letter from the Church at *Mill-Buoy, Folkstone*, was presented by their Minister, Brother *Attwood*, requesting to join the Association, which was unanimously approved, and they were accordingly admitted.—The Moderator then concluded in Prayer.

Public Worship began at Seven o'Clock in the Evening—Brother *Middleton* prayed.—Brother *Baldock* preached from *Micah, vii. 14. Feed thy People*—And concluded in Prayer.

Met on *Wednesday Morning at Six o'Clock.*—Brother *Cook* prayed.—Brother *Booker* also prayed, and was desired to read the *Circular Letter*, which he had been deputed to draw up—which was approved of and ordered to be printed.—The Case of the Church at *Smarden* was considered, and Brother *Purdy* was desired to draw up a Letter of Advice to them, and to inform them, that the Ministers and Messengers would recommend it to their several Churches, to assist them with the Use of their Elders in proper Turn for the Space of *Three Months.*—The Moderator concluded in Prayer.

Public Worship began at Ten o'Clock.—Brother *Lloyd* prayed.—Brother *Russell* preached from *1 Cor. xvi. 13, 14. Watch ye, stand fast in the Faith, quit you like Men, be strong. Let all your Things be done with Charity.*—Brother *Purdy* prayed.—Brother *Booker* preached from *Gal. iii. 10. For as many as are of the Works of the Law are under the Curse; For it is written, cursed is every one that continueth not in all Things which are written in the Book of the Law to do them.*—Sang the Praises of God in suitable Hymns.—Brother *Vidler* concluded in Prayer.

Met again at Five o'Clock, to conclude Business.—Brother *Stace, jun.* prayed.—Brother *Purdy* read the Letter of Advice to the Church at *Smarden*, which was approved of, and signed
by

by the Moderator.—Agreed to observe the *First Wednesday in November* as a Day of Fasting and Prayer, on Account of the prevalence of Sin in the Land, and the low State of Religion in general.—We have Reason to be thankful for that Degree of Peace, and the divine Presence, which we enjoyed throughout our Meetings.

Agreed to hold the next Association at *Battle*, on the *First Tuesday and Wednesday in June, 1735* —Put up at the *George*.—Brother *Attwood*, and Brother *Cromwell*, to preach.—In case of Failure, Brother *Copping*, and Brother *Lloyd*.—The Assembly was dismissed with Prayer, by the Moderator.

The STATE of the ASSOCIATED CHURCHES in 1784.

Addition	{ Baptized	34
	{ Received by Letter	6
		—40
Diminution	{ Dismissed	2
	{ Excluded	8
	{ Dead	6
		—16
Increase		24



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